

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 /071 W
-----090315 202030Z /70

R 181009Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7232
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, JA
SUBJECT: COALITION CANDIDATE WINS YOKOHAMA MAYORALTY

REF: TOKYO 2383

1. TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, MICHIKAZU SAIGO, WHO WAS BACKED BY EVERY PARTY EXCEPT JCP, WON YOKOHAMA MAYORALTY RACE APRIL 17. SAIGO RECEIVED 341,006 VOTES TO JCP CANDIDATE SATOSHI ASAKURA'S 269,324. MAVERICK CONSERVATIVE SHUN-SUKE KANEKO GARNED ONLY 36,981. SINCE OUTCOME NEVER REALLY IN DOUBT, AND BECAUSE SUPPORT FROM JSP WAS APPARENTLY MINIMAL, YOKOHAMA VOTERS STAYED AWAY FROM POLLS IN DROVES: VOTING RATE WAS 36 PERCENT COMPARED WITH 65 PERCENT IN MAYORAL RACE FOUR YEARS AGO.

2. BECAUSE OF HIS LONG CAREER AS GOJ OFFICIAL (HE SERVED AS VICE MINISTER IN AUTONOMY MINISTRY), SAIGO WAS CONSIDERED POLITICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND HIS PRIMARY SUPPORT CAME FROM CENTRIST PARTIES AND LDP, WHICH SAW DEPARTURE
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OF JSP'S SEVENTEEN YEAR MAYOR ASUKATA AS OPPORTUNITY TO RECAPTURE ADMINISTRATION OF JAPAN'S THIRD LARGEST CITY. SOCIALISTS RELUCTANTLY JOINED SAIGO CAMP ONLY AFTER IT BECAME APPARENT CONSERVATIVE-CENTRIST CANDIDATE WOULD BE ALMOST UNBEATABLE. IN FACT, YOKOHAMA CITIZENS HARDLY GAVE SAIGO ROUSING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, AND POOR TURNOUT AT POLLS, INDICATIVE OF INADEQUATE COOPERATION AMONG SAIGO'S

BACKERS, MAY COMPLICATE PROSPECTS FOR CENTER-RIGHT COOPERATION, CURRENTLY BEING NEGOTIATED, FOR NEXT YEAR'S GUBERNATORIAL CONTESTS IN OSAKA AND TOKYO. MOREOVER, STRONG SHOWING OF JCP, WHICH, DESPITE FACT ITS CANDIDATE WAS POLITICAL UNKNOWN BEFORE RACE BEGAN, GARNERED MORE THAN TWICE AS MANY YOKOHAMA VOTES AS IT CAPTURED IN LAST UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, WILL GIVE PAUSE TO THOSE IN JSP WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING CLOSER COOPERATION WITH ANTI-COMMUNIST CENTRIST PARTIES IN FUTURE LOCAL CONTESTS. IN END, HOWEVER, SAIGO'S VICTORY REPRESENTS ONE MORE MAJOR CITY LOST TO LEFT-WING PARTIES. MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TOKYO06865
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780169-0923
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780442/aaaabjxg.tel
Line Count: 73
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c79d8bab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 78 TOKYO 2383
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2926159
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COALITION CANDIDATE WINS YOKOHAMA MAYORALTY
TAGS: PINT, JA, (SAIGO, MICHIKAZU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c79d8bab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014